



**VERTIGO**

BILL  
WILLINGHAM

MARK  
BUCKINGHAM

RUSS  
BRAUN



**F A B L E S**

137 Mar '14  
suggested for  
mature readers  
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THREE MONTHS LATER...

MOMMY'S BEING PROTECTIVE NOW.

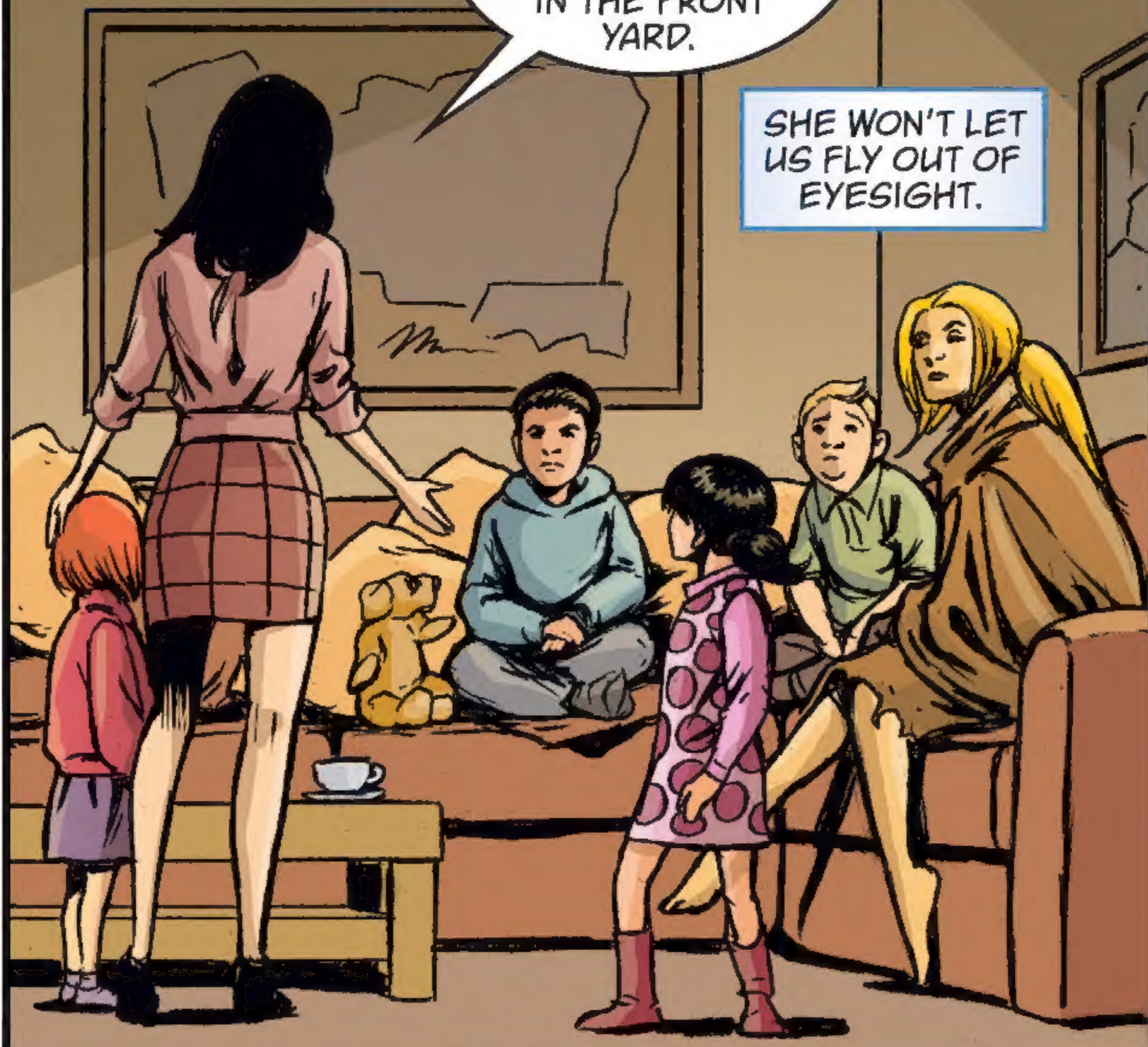
NO, I WANT YOU TO STAY IN.



OVERPROTECTIVE, THERESE SAYS.

MAYBE I'LL LET YOU GO OUT LATER, IF YOU PROMISE TO STAY IN THE FRONT YARD.

SHE WON'T LET US FLY OUT OF EYESIGHT.

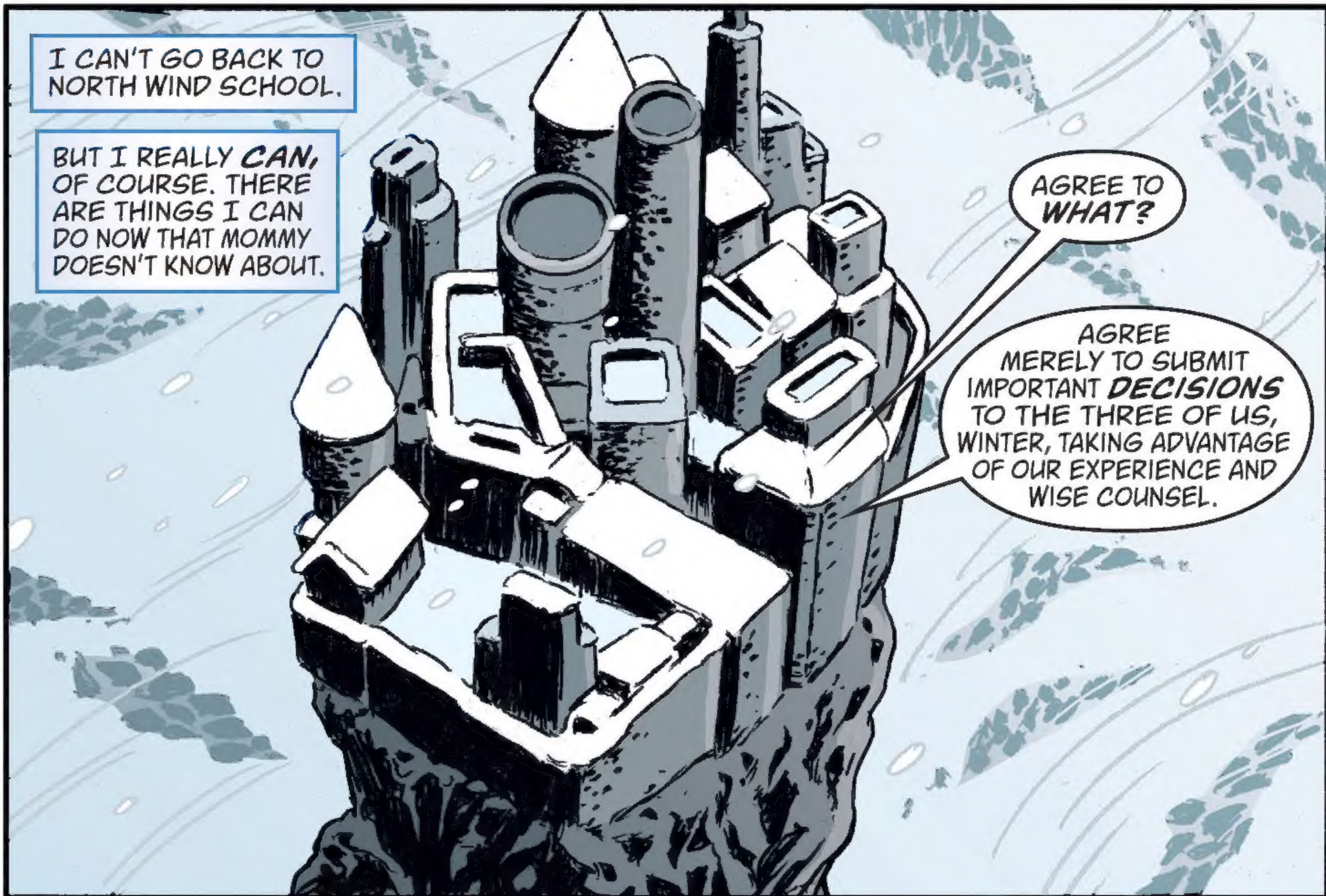


I CAN'T GO BACK TO NORTH WIND SCHOOL.

BUT I REALLY CAN, OF COURSE. THERE ARE THINGS I CAN DO NOW THAT MOMMY DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT.

AGREE TO WHAT?

AGREE MERELY TO SUBMIT IMPORTANT DECISIONS TO THE THREE OF US, WINTER, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF OUR EXPERIENCE AND WISE COUNSEL.



# An Early Winter

Part Six of

# Camelot



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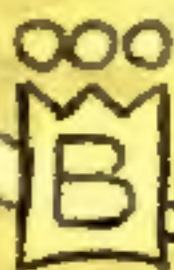
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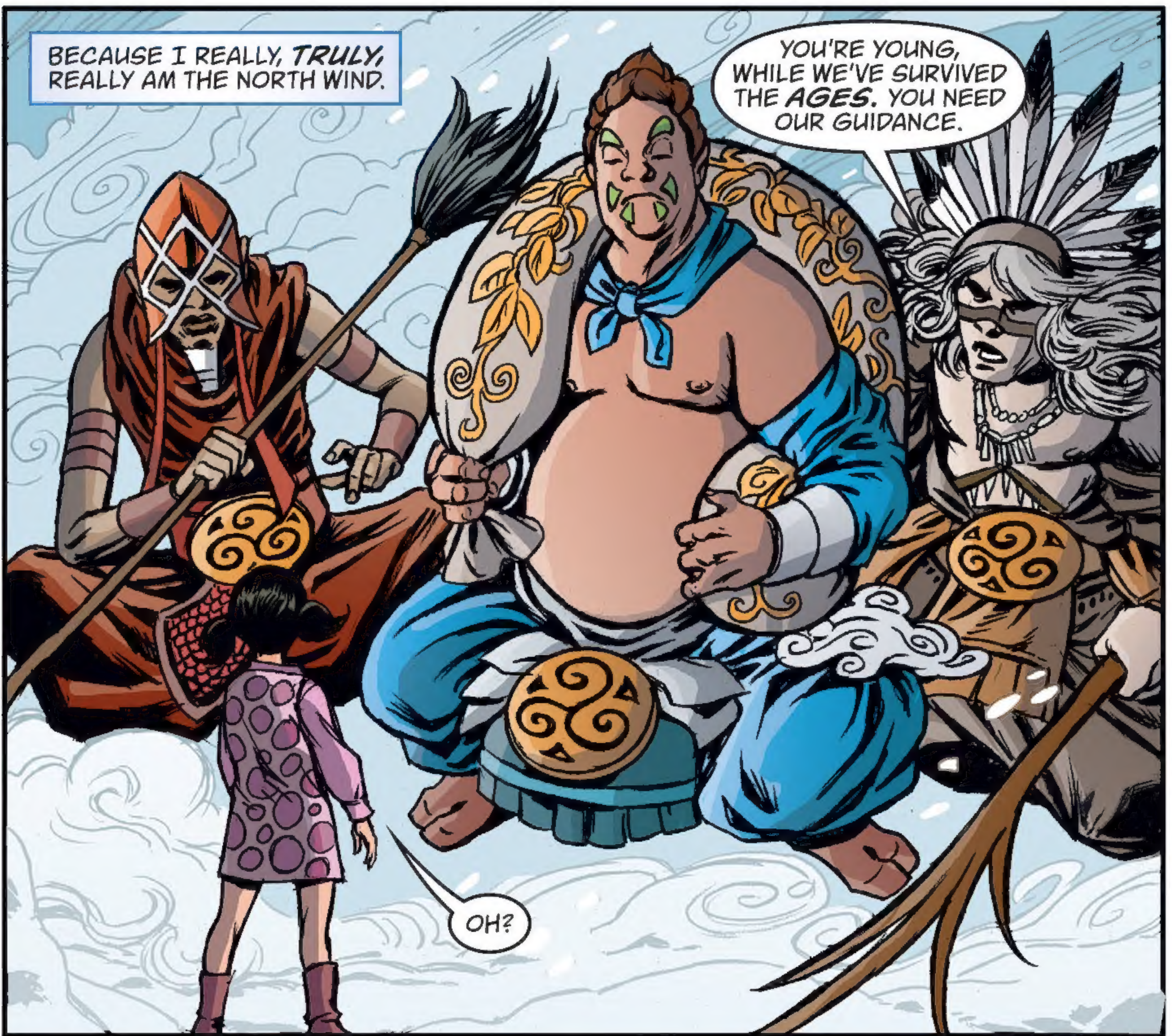
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BECAUSE I REALLY, *TRULY*, REALLY AM THE NORTH WIND.

YOU'RE YOUNG, WHILE WE'VE SURVIVED THE *AGES*. YOU NEED OUR GUIDANCE.

OH?



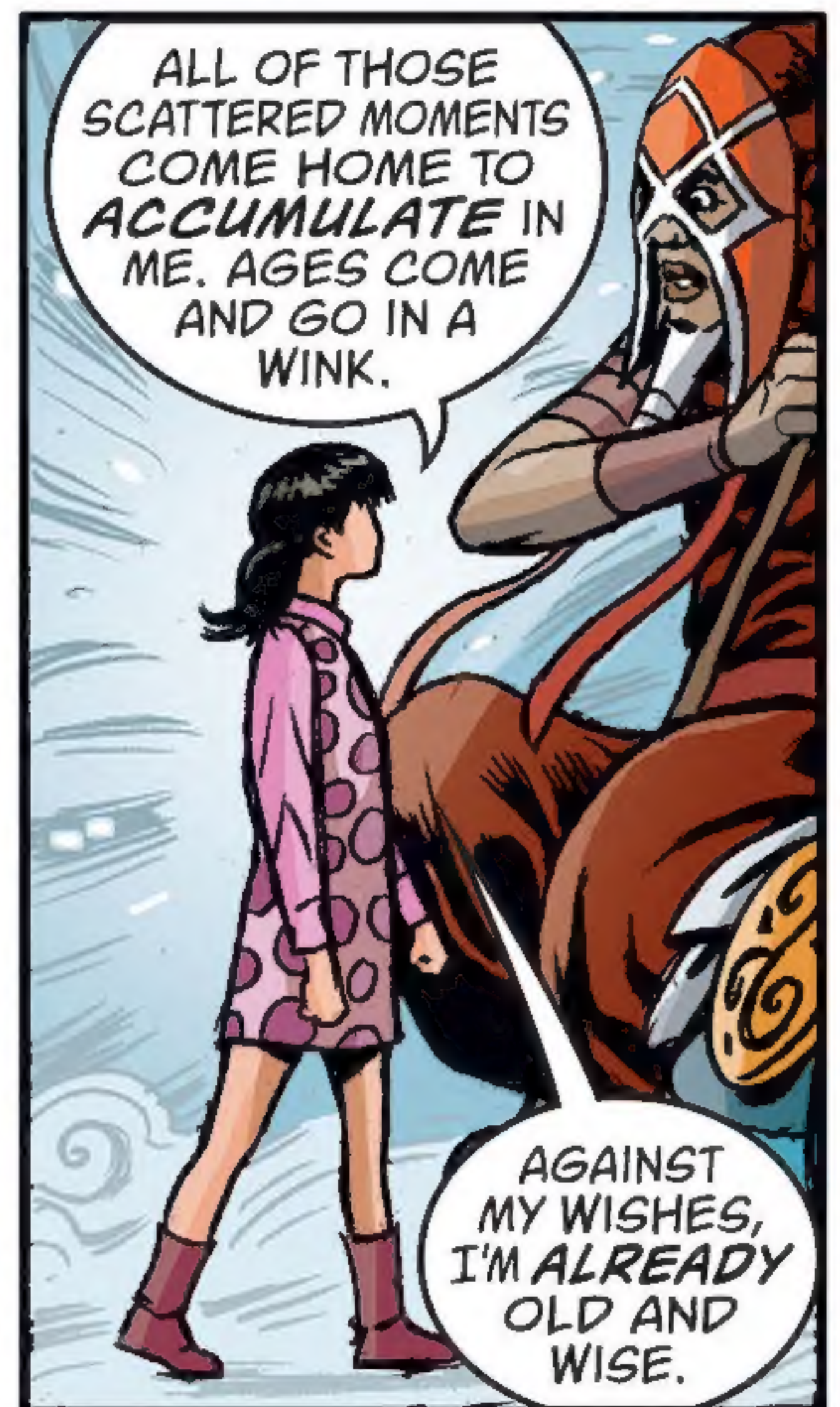
AND THE NORTH WIND IS IN EVERY WORLD, ALL AT ONCE.

YOU THINK I'M YOUNG? STILL? I *WISH* THAT WERE SO.



I *INHABIT* EACH SNOWFLAKE ON ITS WINDSWEPT FALL TOWARDS COUNTLESS WORLDS.

I DIRECT EVERY NORTHERN BREEZE, AND *COMMAND* THE MIGHTY WORKS OF INFINITE STORMS.



ALL OF THOSE SCATTERED MOMENTS COME HOME TO *ACCUMULATE* IN ME. AGES COME AND GO IN A WINK.

AGAINST MY WISHES, I'M *ALREADY* OLD AND WISE.

I WON'T  
BE *BABIED*,  
HUMORED OR  
PATRONIZED!

AND I  
WILL NOT  
*SUBMIT*  
MYSELF TO  
YOU!

BEST FLEE  
NOW. ABIDE FOR A  
TIME IN YOUR *OWN*  
REALMS, OR RISK  
MY GROWING  
ANGER.



AT THE SAME TIME I'M SCOLDING THE THREE WINDS, I'M ALSO HOME, TRYING TO BE A GOOD GIRL, WHILE MOMMY TRIES SO HARD TO PROTECT US.

CAN I HELP YOU WASH THE DISHES, MOMMY?



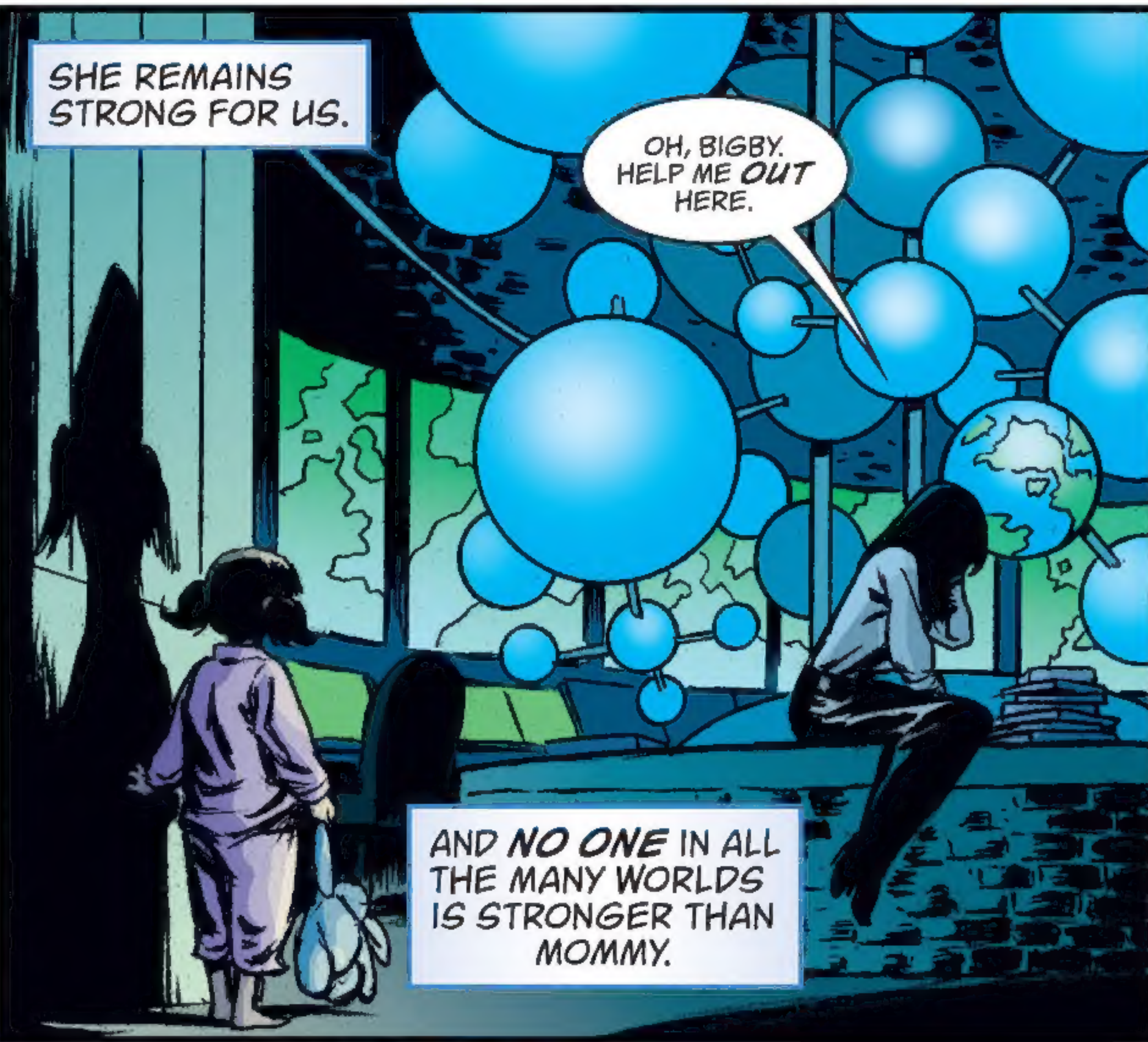
I THINK MAYBE SHE WANTS, ALMOST MORE THAN **ANYTHING**, TO SINK INTO DESPAIR AND DEPRESSION, BUT SHE WON'T LET HERSELF.

NO, SWEETIE. I'VE GOT IT. GO PLAY WITH THE OTHERS.



SHE REMAINS STRONG FOR US.

OH, BIGBY. HELP ME OUT HERE.



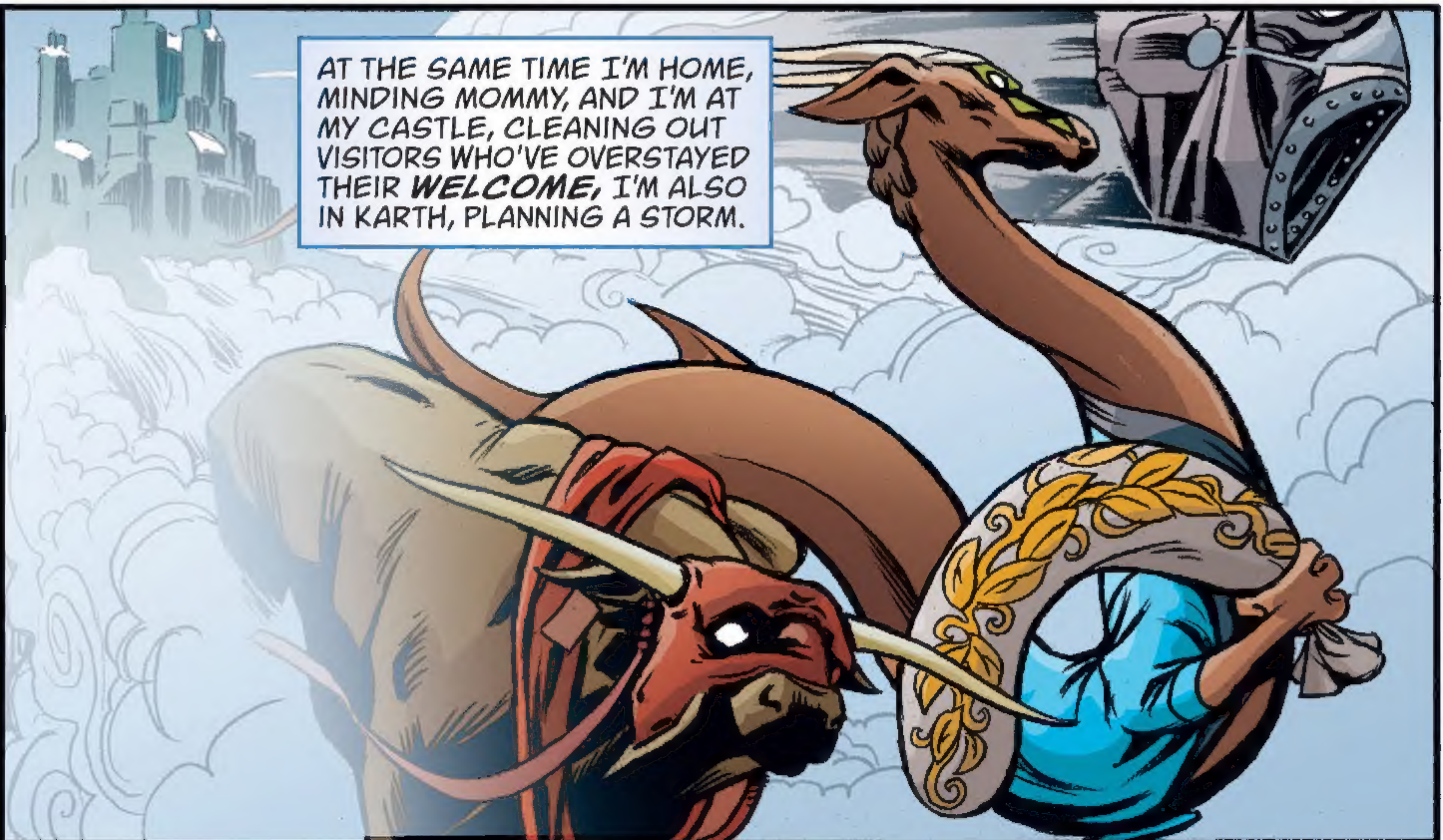
AND **NO ONE** IN ALL THE MANY WORLDS IS STRONGER THAN MOMMY.

I KNOW, BECAUSE I CHECKED.

GIVE A GIRL A SIGN THAT YOU'RE STILL OUT THERE.



AT THE SAME TIME I'M HOME, MINDING MOMMY, AND I'M AT MY CASTLE, CLEANING OUT VISITORS WHO'VE OVERSTAYED THEIR **WELCOME**, I'M ALSO IN KARTH, PLANNING A STORM.

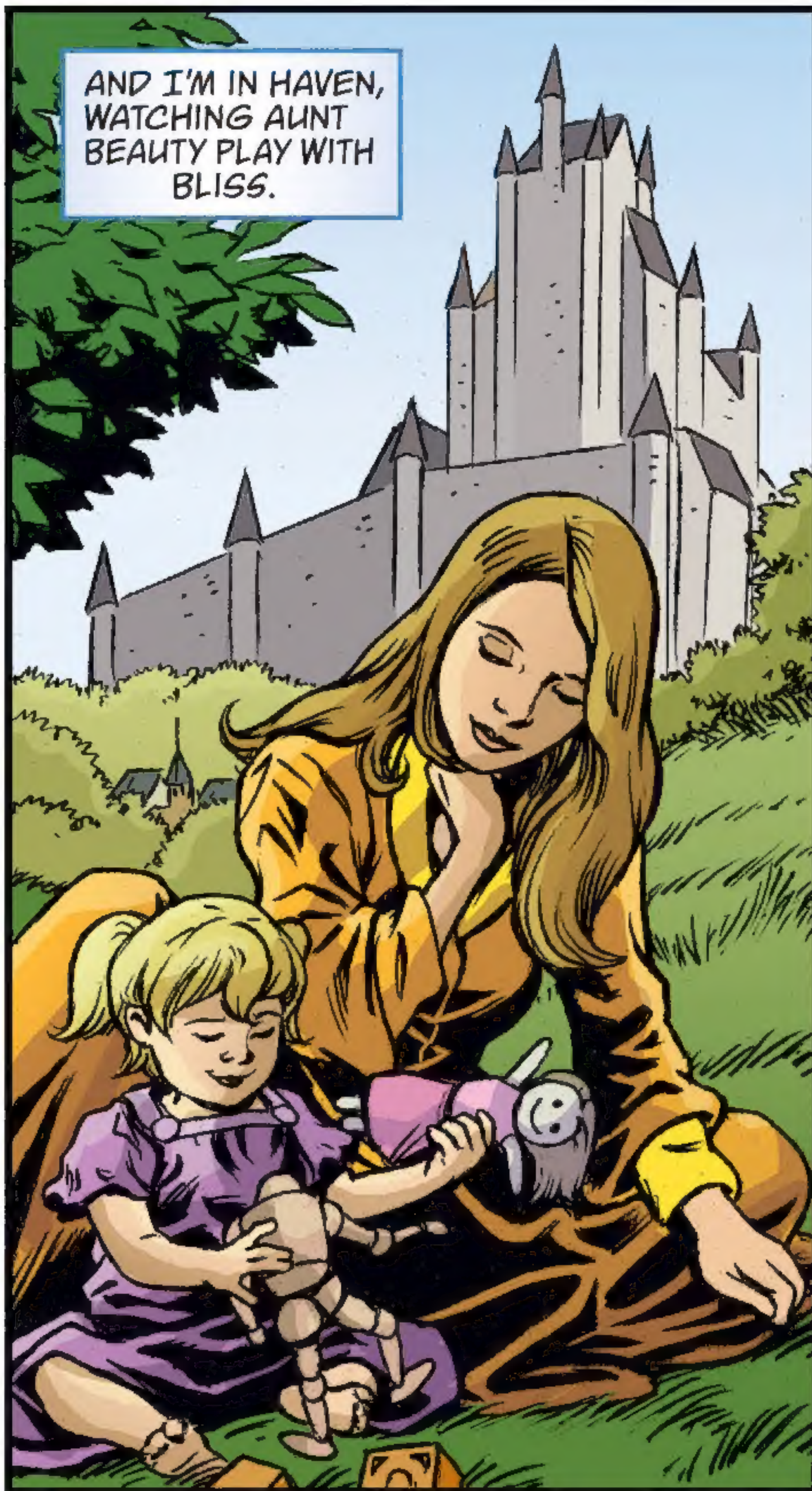


AND I'M IN TOYLAND, LOOKING OVER THE PLACE WHERE THERESE SPENT SO MANY YEARS AWAY FROM US.

WHEN WILL THE **QUEEN** BE COMING BACK, DO Y'THINK?



AND I'M IN HAVEN, WATCHING AUNT BEAUTY PLAY WITH BLISS.



AND I'M JUST OVER THE HILLS, WATCHING AUNT ROSE BUILD HER NEW ORDER OF KNIGHTS.



A DOLLAR ON BO PEEP KNOCKING THE BUM KNIGHT ON HIS ASS.

SHE'S IMPRESSIVE, I'LL GRANT YOU, BUT YOU JUST LOST A **DOLLAR**, MISSY.

WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO VISIT AUNT ROSE ANYMORE, BUT I CAN'T **NOT** BE THERE, OR ALL WINDS WOULD DIE AROUND HER AND HER LANDS.



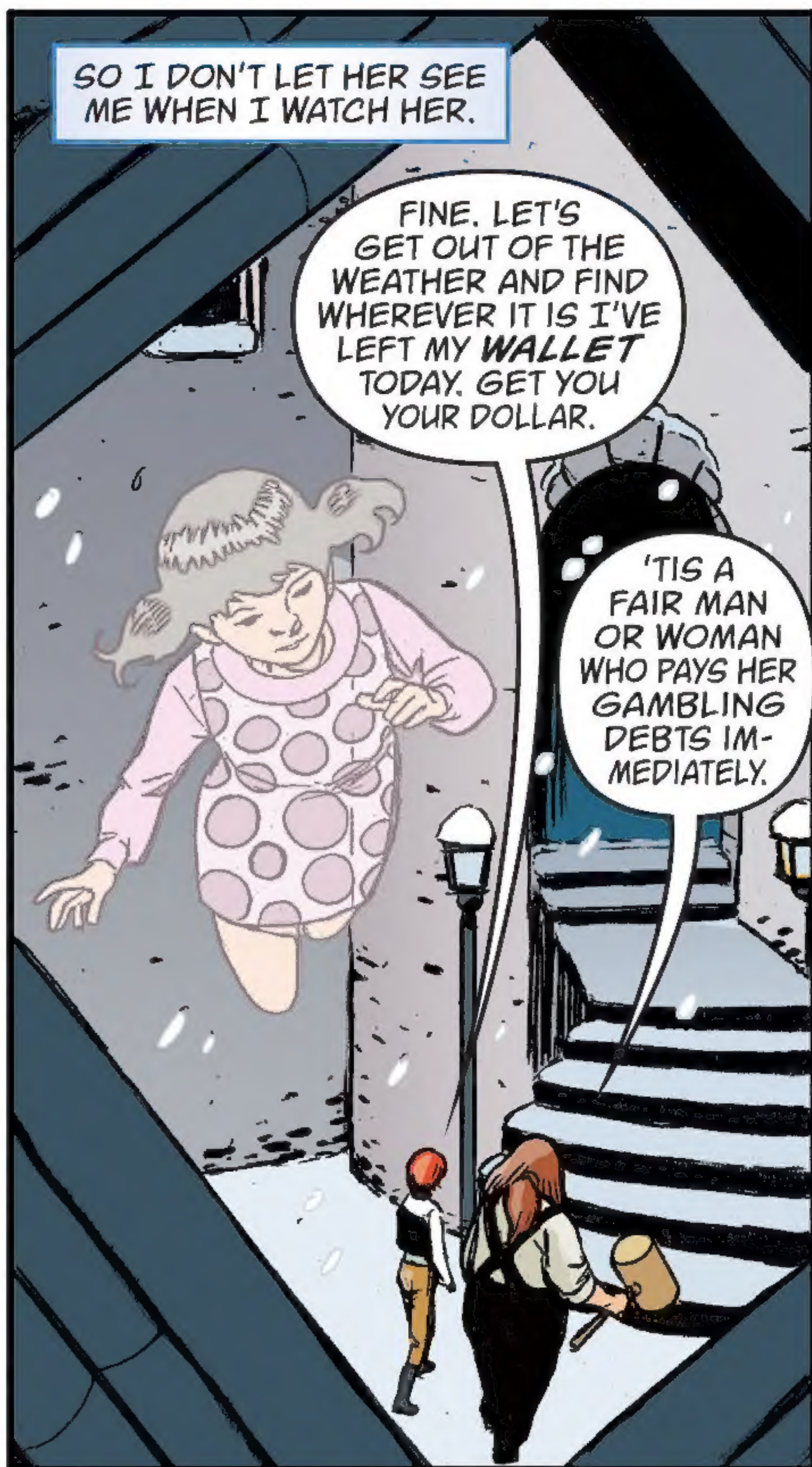
SEE? YONDER BUM IS A WINNER.

EVEN AGAINST A KILLER LIKE BO.

SO I DON'T LET HER SEE ME WHEN I WATCH HER.

FINE. LET'S GET OUT OF THE WEATHER AND FIND WHEREVER IT IS I'VE LEFT MY **WALLET** TODAY. GET YOU YOUR DOLLAR.

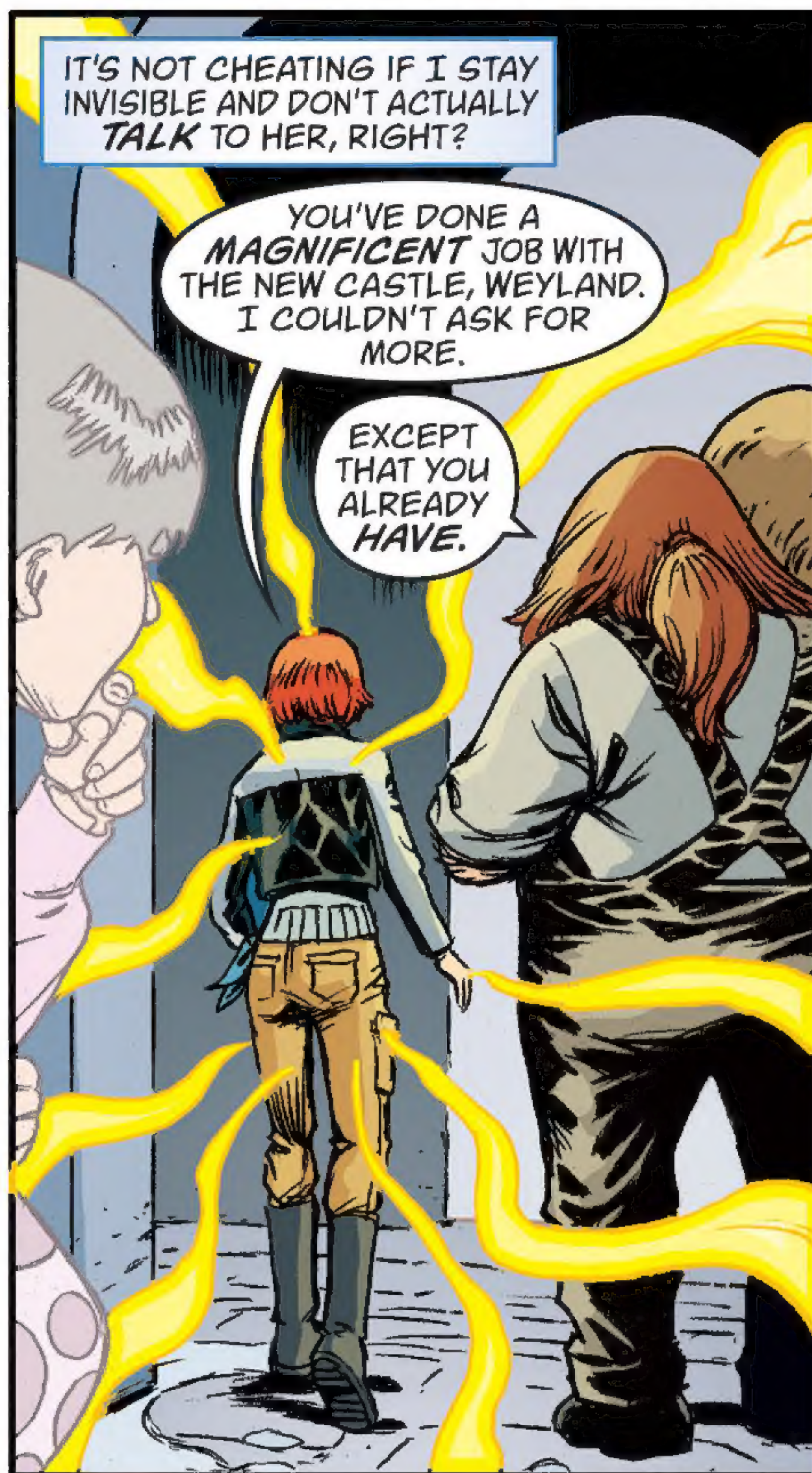
'TIS A FAIR MAN OR WOMAN WHO PAYS HER GAMBLING DEBTS IMMEDIATELY.



IT'S NOT CHEATING IF I STAY INVISIBLE AND DON'T ACTUALLY **TALK** TO HER, RIGHT?

YOU'VE DONE A **MAGNIFICENT** JOB WITH THE NEW CASTLE, WEYLAND. I COULDN'T ASK FOR MORE.

EXCEPT THAT YOU ALREADY **HAVE**.



I CAN SEE SOMETHING I DON'T THINK EVEN **AUNT ROSE** REALIZES. SHE'S GATHERING HER POWER.

A SPRAWL OF **ADDITIONAL** KEEPS AND CASTLES HUDDLING AROUND THIS ONE.

WELL, TRUE.


EVENTUALLY.



NO, I WAS WRONG. **NOT** JUST HERS. FOREIGN ENERGIES, TOO.

**SIX** KNIGHTS TO KICK OFF OUR NEW ORDER, AND THEY CAN EASILY BE HOUSED HERE, IN THE MAIN PALACE.





I THINK MAYBE, WITHOUT KNOWING IT, SHE SENT OUT NOT *ONLY* A CALL FOR CHAMPIONS OF FLESH AND BONE, BUT A *SUMMONING* OF GREAT FORCES TO FLOW HER WAY.

AND MORE WILL COME IN A SHORT TIME. WE'RE GOING TO EXPAND *RAPIDLY*.

I ENVISION A *HUNDRED* KNIGHTS IN MY NEW ORDER. THEN *THOUSANDS*.

WE HAVE THE ROOM HERE, WEYLAND. YOU STARTED WITH A *GRAND CENTRAL* CASTLE. NOW BUILD ME A *CITY* TO SURROUND IT.





TO PLEDGE THEMSELVES TO HER.

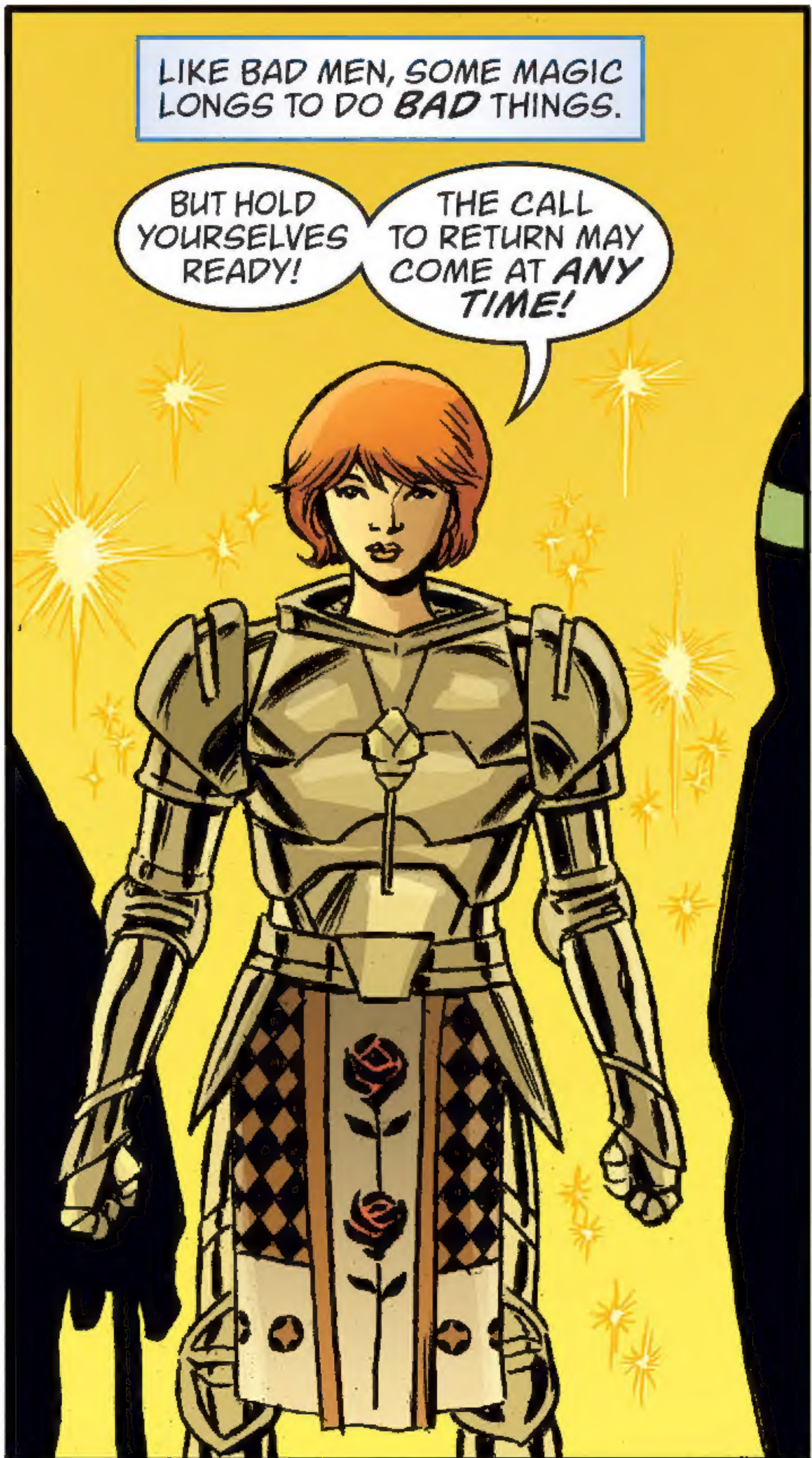
EXCELLENT WORK! YOU DID YOURSELVES PROUD!

I WANT YOU TO KNOW EACH ONE OF YOU HAS PROVED HIMSELF CAPABLE OF BECOMING A KNIGHT OF THE ROUND TABLE-- SOMEDAY!



MAGIC ISN'T REALLY ALIVE. NOT EXACTLY. BUT IT YEARNS.

SO I'M SENDING YOU HOME, FOR NOW.

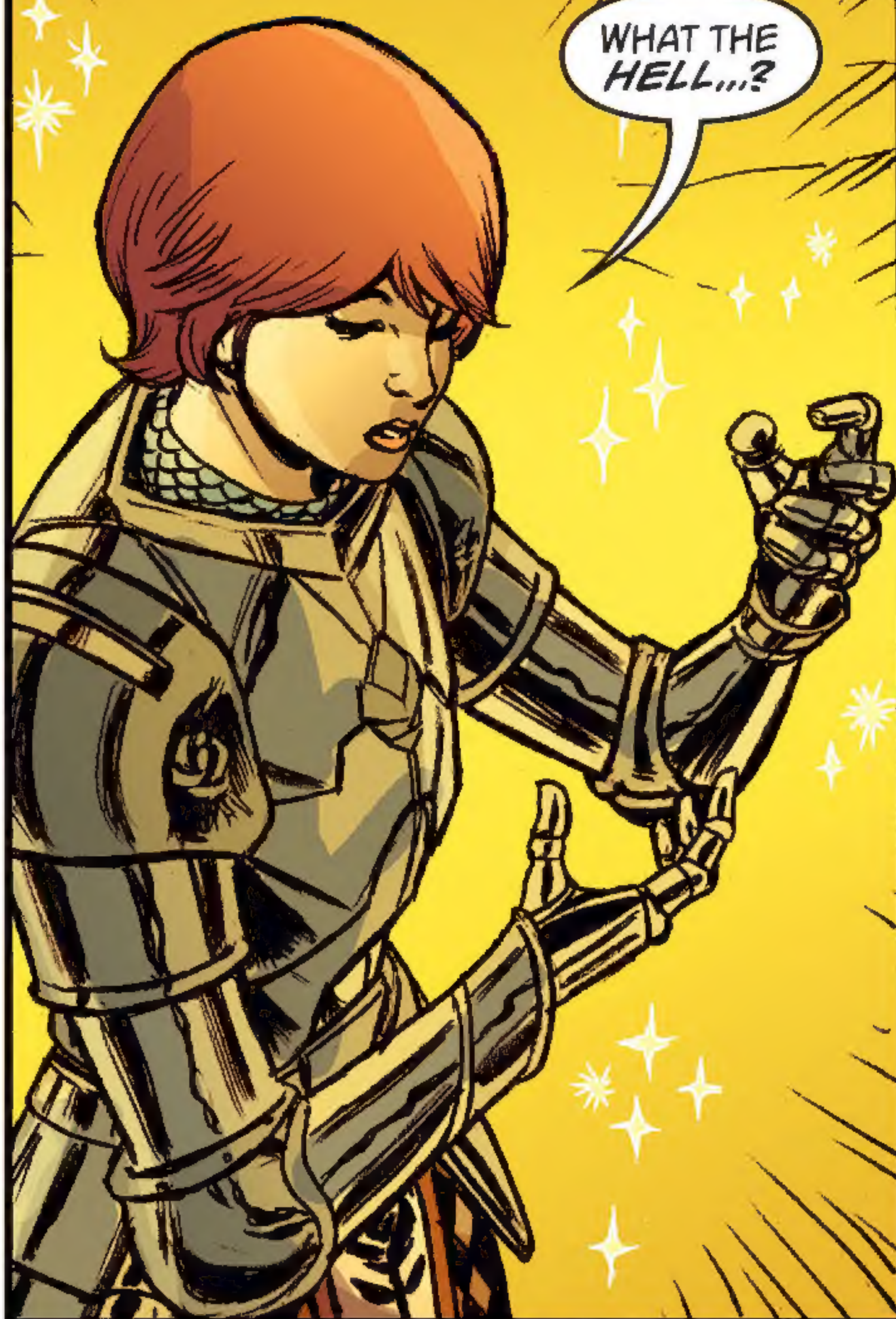


LIKE BAD MEN, SOME MAGIC LONGS TO DO *BAD* THINGS.

BUT HOLD YOURSELVES READY!

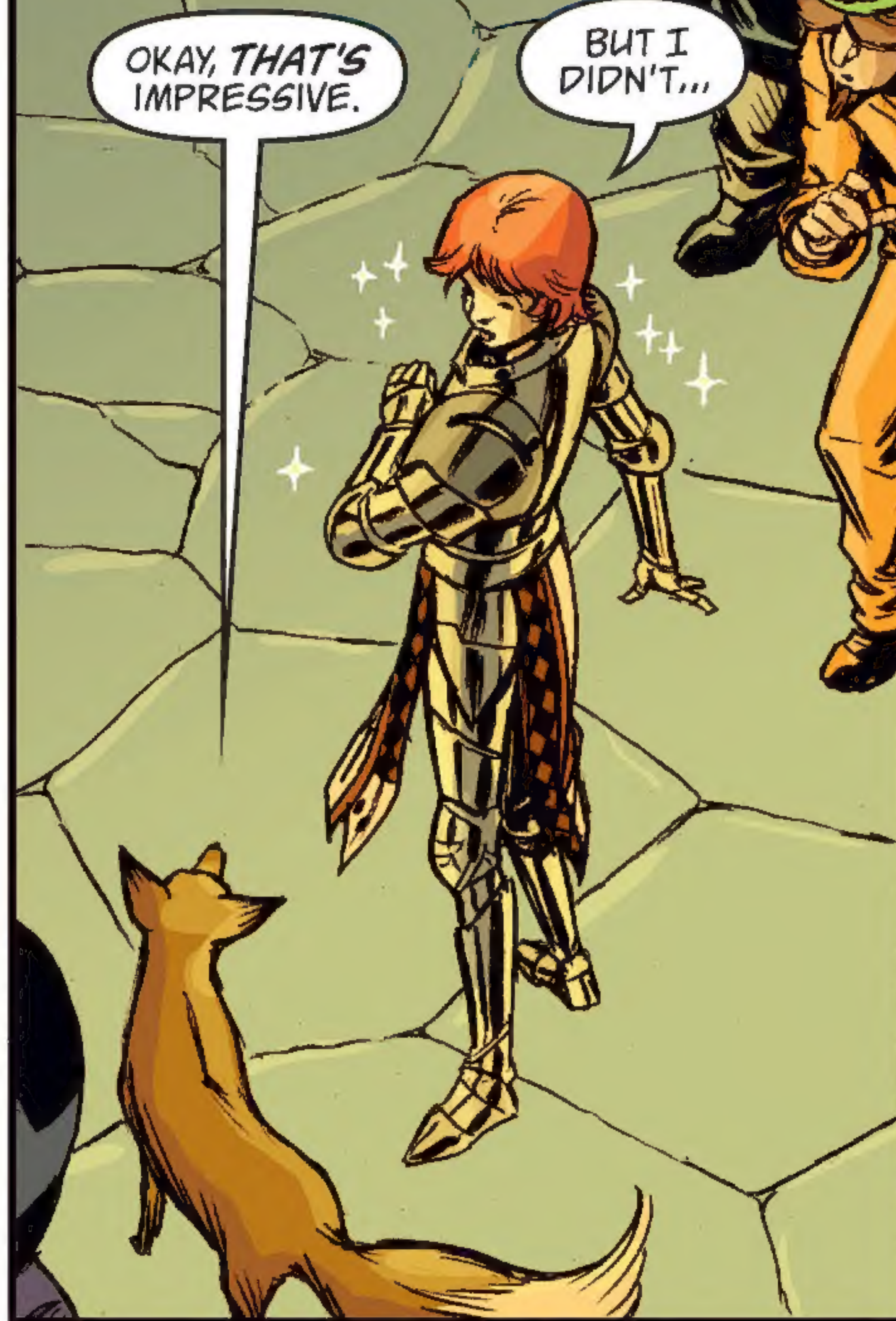
THE CALL TO RETURN MAY COME AT ANY TIME!

BUT, LIKE KIDS WHO LONG TO BE MIGHTY HEROES SOMEDAY, SOME MAGIC WANTS TO SERVE A **GREAT PURPOSE**.



WHAT THE HELL...?

BACK IN HIS DAY, KING ARTHUR DIDN'T PUT SO MUCH INTO MOTION. HE WAS A MIGHTY FORCE, TO BE SURE, BUT STILL **HUMAN. MUNDANE.**



OKAY, THAT'S IMPRESSIVE.

BUT I DIDN'T...

AUNT ROSE IS SO MUCH **MORE**. MORE THAN HUMAN. MORE THAN EVEN FABLE. WHY CAN'T SHE **SEE** IT?

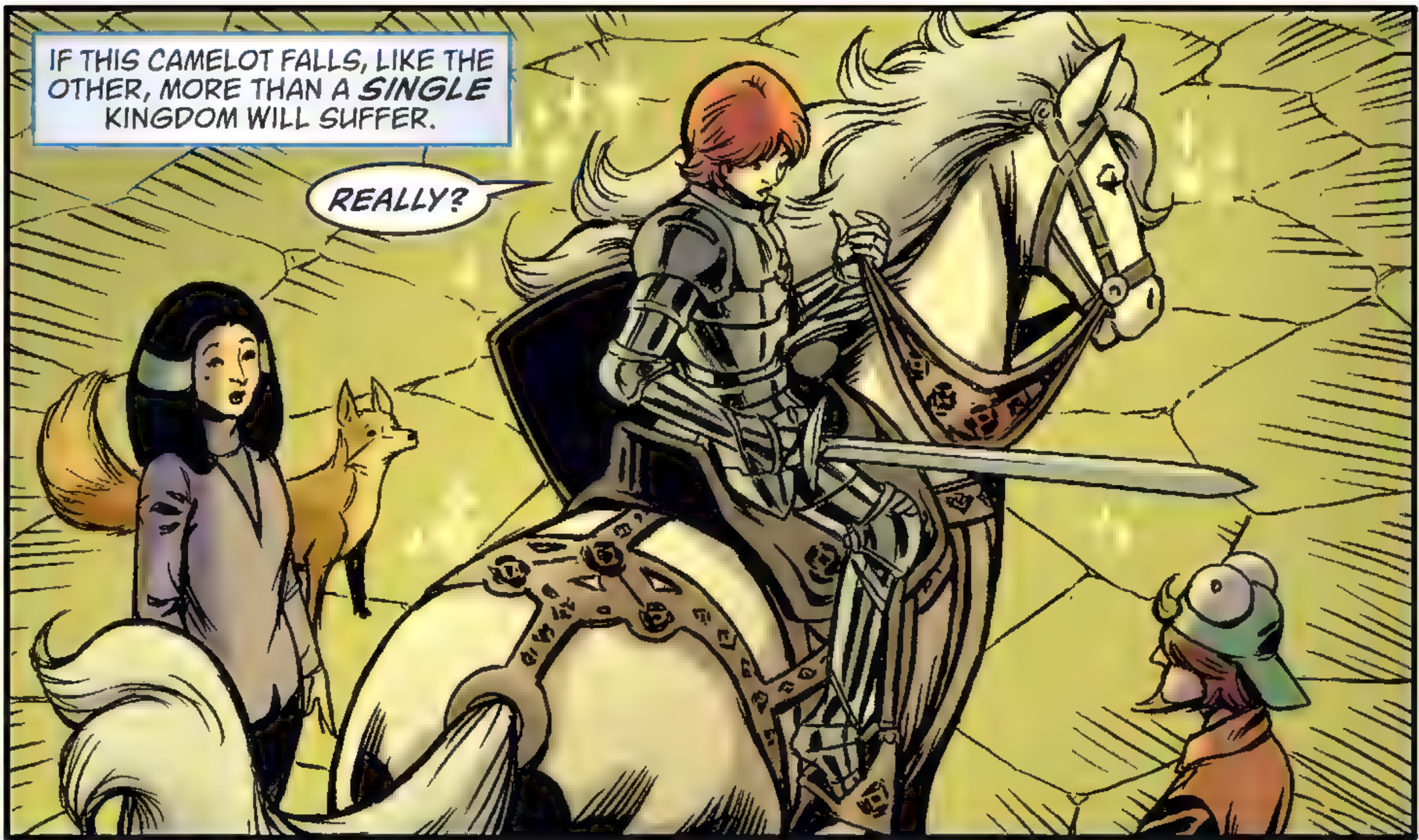


IF I CAN JUST... NNGGGH...

SHE'S STARTING SOMETHING THAT SHE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO **CONTROL**.



NOW, CUT THAT OUT!



IF THIS CAMELOT FALLS, LIKE THE OTHER, MORE THAN A *SINGLE* KINGDOM WILL SUFFER.

REALLY?



ENTIRE WORLDS WILL PERISH.

YEESH!

I THINK I SHOULD TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT YOU, ROSE RED.



A FORMAL EXAMINATION.

TO DETERMINE WHAT?

WHO'S CAUSING THIS, FOR ONE THING.

THINK HE'LL LET ME PET HIM?



YOU SAID I WAS.

I THINK SO STILL. THE FIRST TIME YOU SENT CANDIDATES MAGICALLY HOME, IT WAS QUITE A SURPRISE....

...TO YOU AS WELL AS THE REST OF US.



NOW YOU DO IT INTENTIONALLY, WITHOUT DISCERNIBLE EFFORT.

WHAT ELSE, I WONDER, MIGHT YOU NEWLY BE ABLE TO DO?

AT THAT SAME MOMENT I'M ALSO AT THE NORTH POLE--THE *REAL* ONE WHERE SANTA CLAUS LIVES, NOT THE NEARLY LIFELESS COPY IN THE MUNDY WORLD.

WELCOME BACK, WINTER.

DID YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

I'M TALKING TO FATHER CHRISTMAS OF COURSE. WHAT *ELSE* WOULD ONE DO THERE?

SOME, MAYBE, BUT MOSTLY I CAME TO REESTABLISH OLD BOUNDARIES, NOW THAT I'VE TAKEN OVER THE FAMILY BUSINESS.

AND TO REMIND YOU, SANTA, THAT YOU'RE A SUBSET OF *ME*, ALBEIT A UNIQUE ONE.

OF COURSE. THAT WAS NEVER A POINT OF CONFUSION.

LIKE SO MANY *OTHERS*, I AM A CREATURE OF THE NORTH.

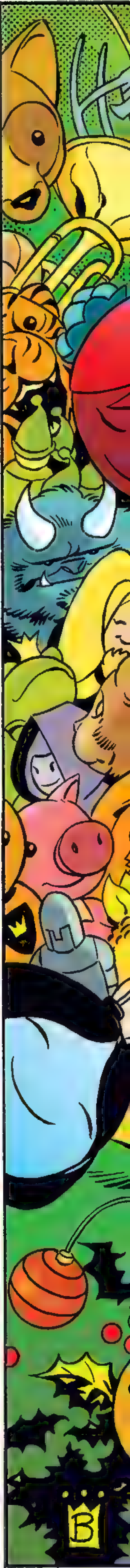
GOOD.

I DON'T MIND YOU BEING AN AVATAR OF HOPE, ALONG WITH THE *OTHER* OUTSIDE DUTIES YOU TAKE ON.

BUT NEVER FORGET, YOU'RE FIRST AND LAST *MY* VASSAL, AS YOU ALWAYS HAVE BEEN TO THE NORTH WIND.

DO YOU HAVE SOME *SPECIFIC* INSTRUCTIONS IN MIND?

I'M YOURS TO COMMAND.



I KEPT OUT OF THE FABLE-TOWN CASTLE GROUNDS, FOR THE MOST PART. MY WINDS TEND TO CHILL BODY AND SOUL.

GRINDING AWAY GLASSY DUST.

LEAVING BUT A RING.



WHY DO THAT TO THE FRIENDS AND ALLIES OF MY MOMMY AND DADDY?

CONTROLLING RAGE, LOVE, AND LUST.

AND EVERY OTHER THING.



BESIDES, IT'S HARD TO SEE DADDY DEAD AND TURNED INTO *BROKEN GLASS*.

DARKNESS IS MY TRUE LOVE'S DOWER,

CLOTHING ME WITH HIS POWER,



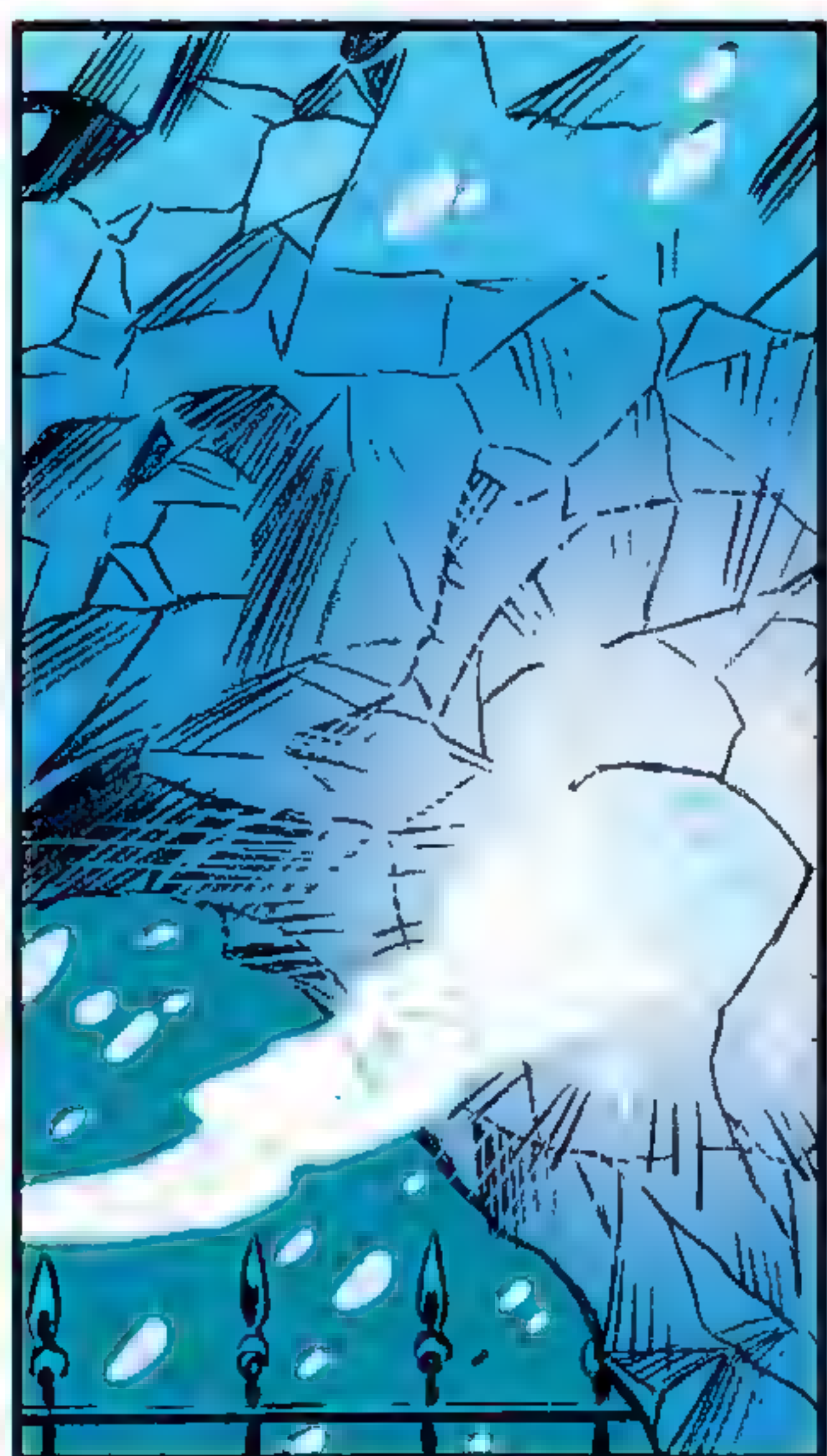
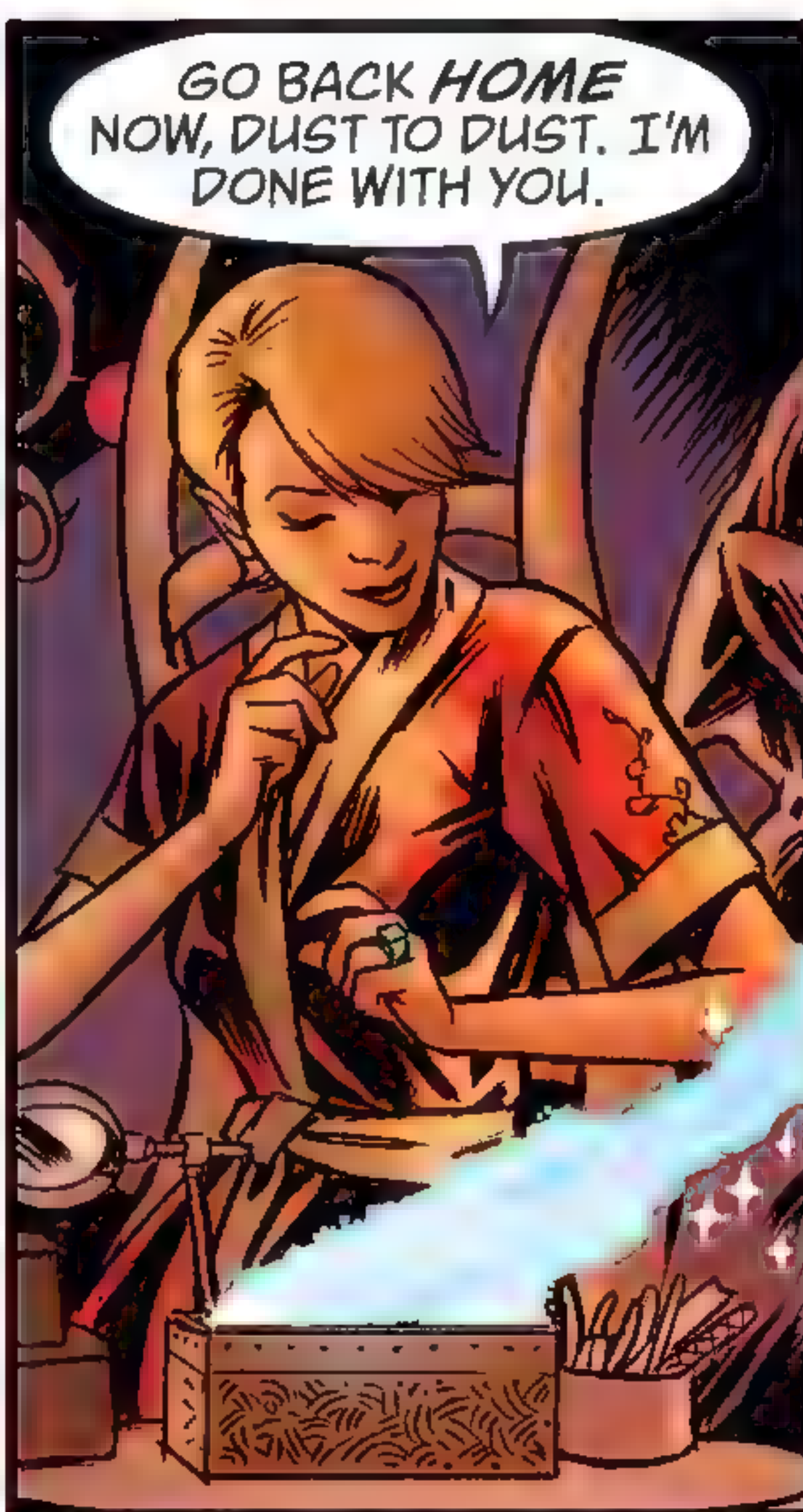
I ONLY LEARNED MUCH LATER THE *TERRIBLE* MISTAKE I'D MADE BY NOT WATCHING THE PLACE MORE CAREFULLY.

CONJURING MONSTROUS DREAD,

CALLING BACK THE WILD DEAD,

CLOSING ON THE FATEFUL HOUR.





WHEN MOMMY TUCKED ME SLEEPY INTO BED THAT NIGHT, SHE'D NO IDEA I WAS ALSO TALKING TO THE *SNOW QUEEN*.

...A SUBSET OF ME.

WHAT AN ODD THING YOU ARE.

A LITTLE GIRL IN ASPECT, AND SOMETIMES YOU DO TALK LIKE A CHILD.

THEN, AT *OTHER* TIMES YOU TALK LIKE ONE WEIGHED DOWN BY THE HEAVY WISDOM OF CENTURIES.

WHICH IS THE *TRUE* YOU, I WONDER?

BOTH.

ALL.

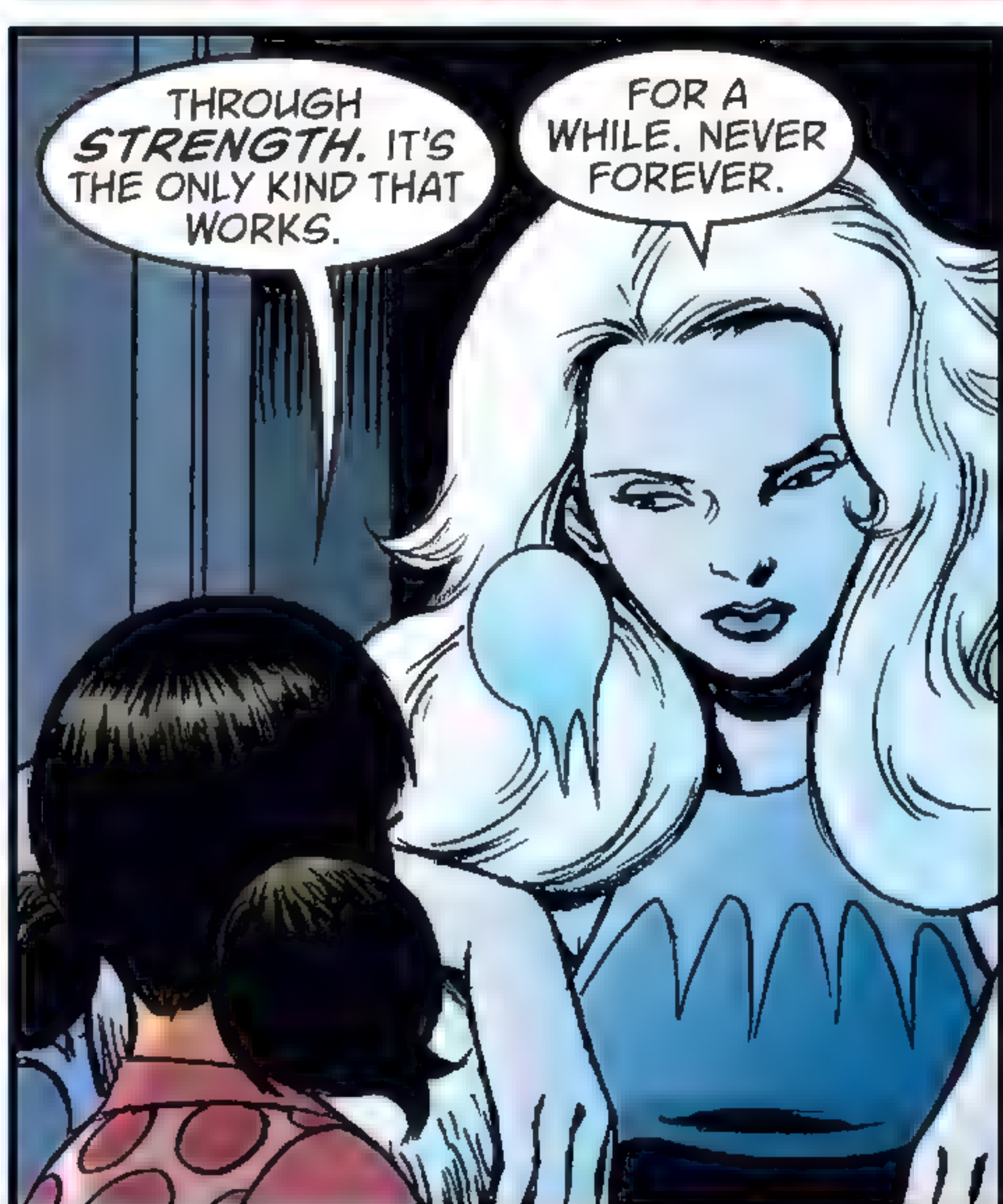
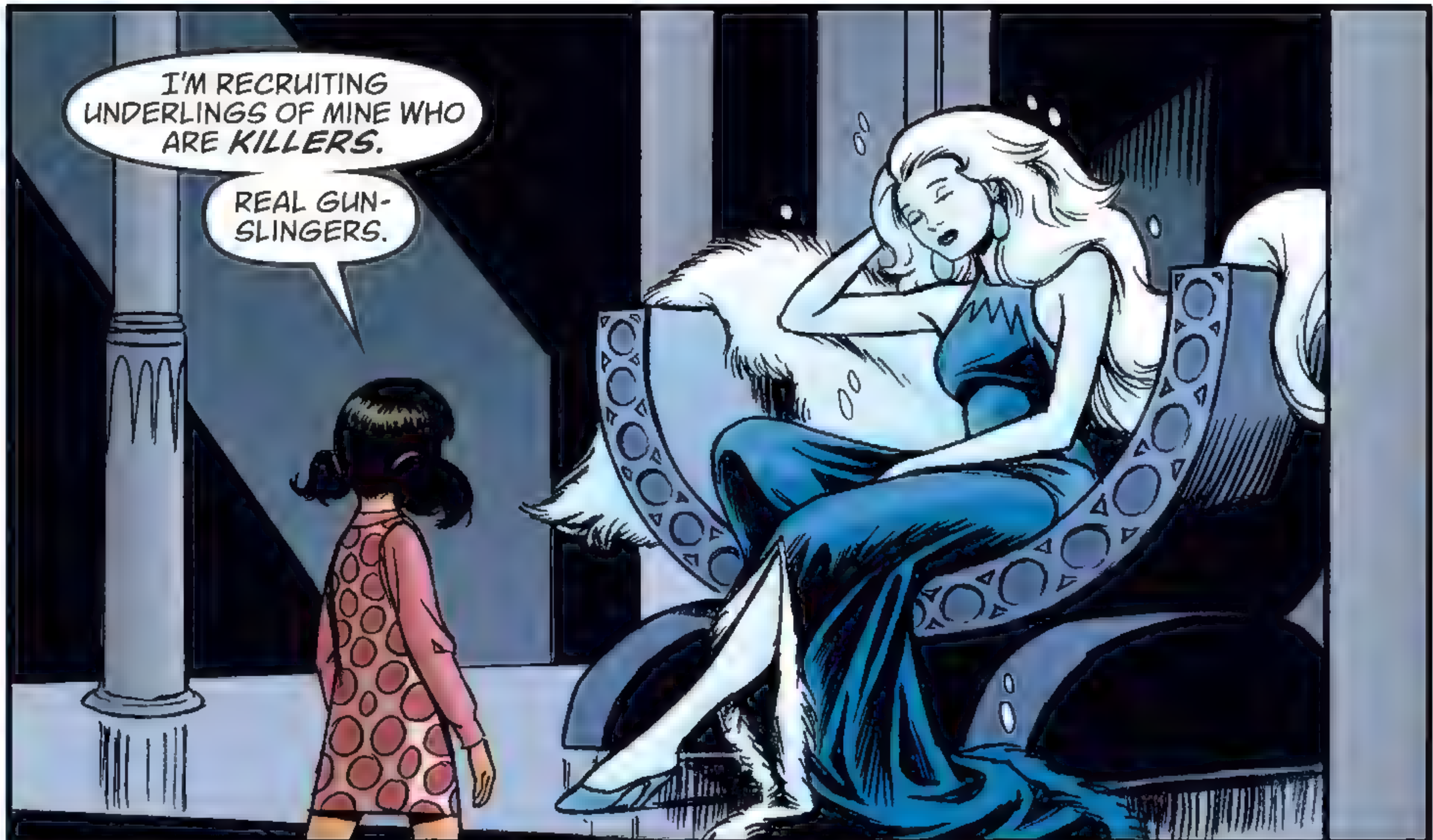
I CONTAIN MULTITUDES.

I'M STILL NOT QUITE SURE WHY YOU'RE HERE.

BECAUSE YOU'RE ONE OF THE MORE *POWERFUL* FORCES AT MY CALL.

MORE TO THE POINT, YOU'RE WIDELY *KNOWN* TO BE DEADLY, WHICH MIGHT BE *MORE* IMPORTANT THAN THE RAW FACT OF IT.

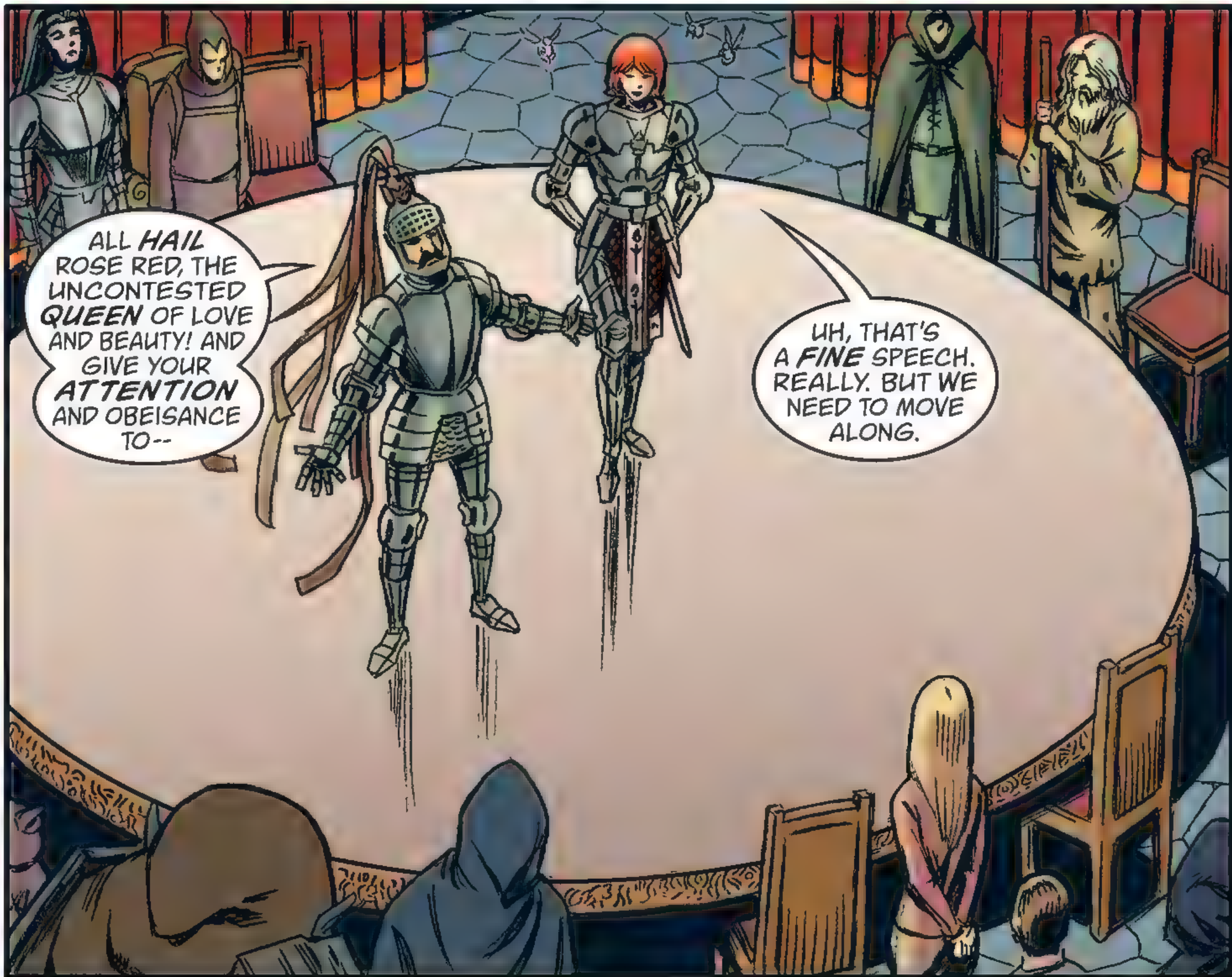






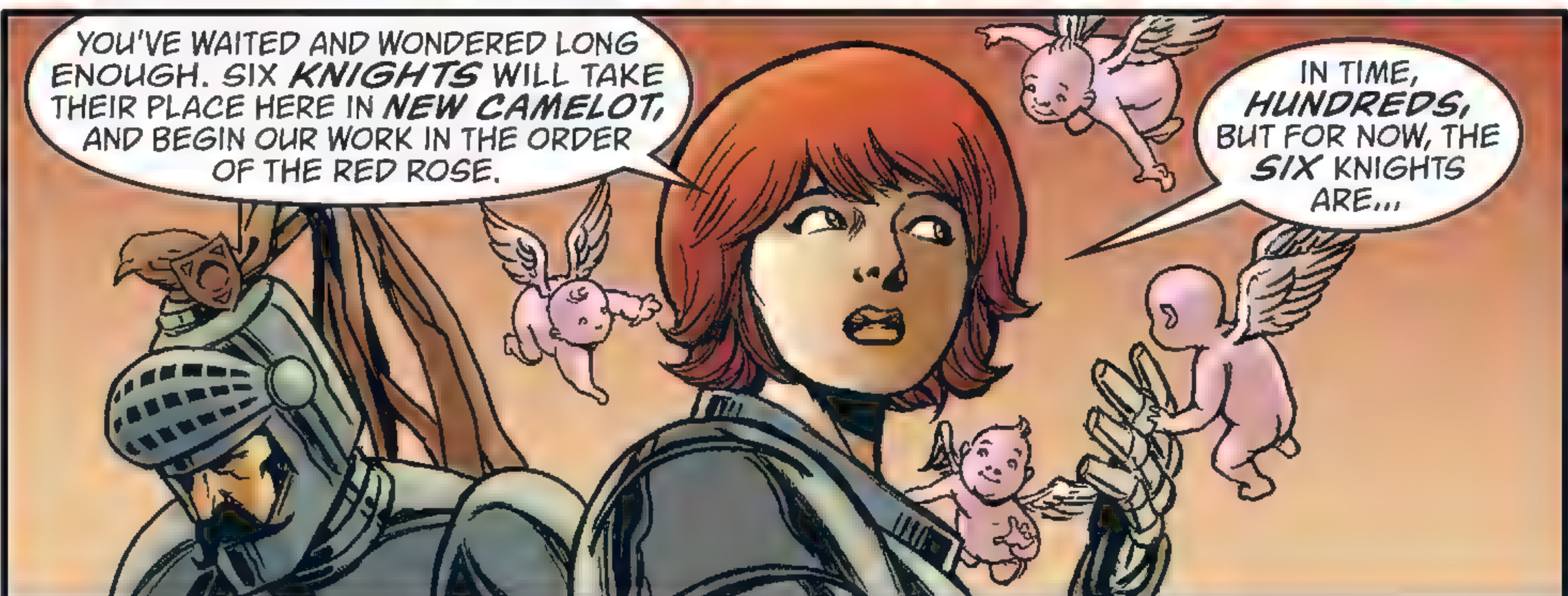
DAYS  
MOVED  
ALONG...

...ARE THE  
DAYS OF ROSE  
RED, WHERE WE  
SHALL REACH  
FOR THE  
STARS.



ALL HAIL  
ROSE RED, THE  
UNCONTESTED  
QUEEN OF LOVE  
AND BEAUTY! AND  
GIVE YOUR  
ATTENTION  
AND OBEISANCE  
TO--

UH, THAT'S  
A FINE SPEECH.  
REALLY. BUT WE  
NEED TO MOVE  
ALONG.



YOU'VE WAITED AND WONDERED LONG  
ENOUGH. SIX *KNIGHTS* WILL TAKE  
THEIR PLACE HERE IN *NEW CAMELOT*,  
AND BEGIN OUR WORK IN THE ORDER  
OF THE RED ROSE.

IN TIME,  
*HUNDREDS*,  
BUT FOR NOW, THE  
*SIX KNIGHTS*  
ARE...



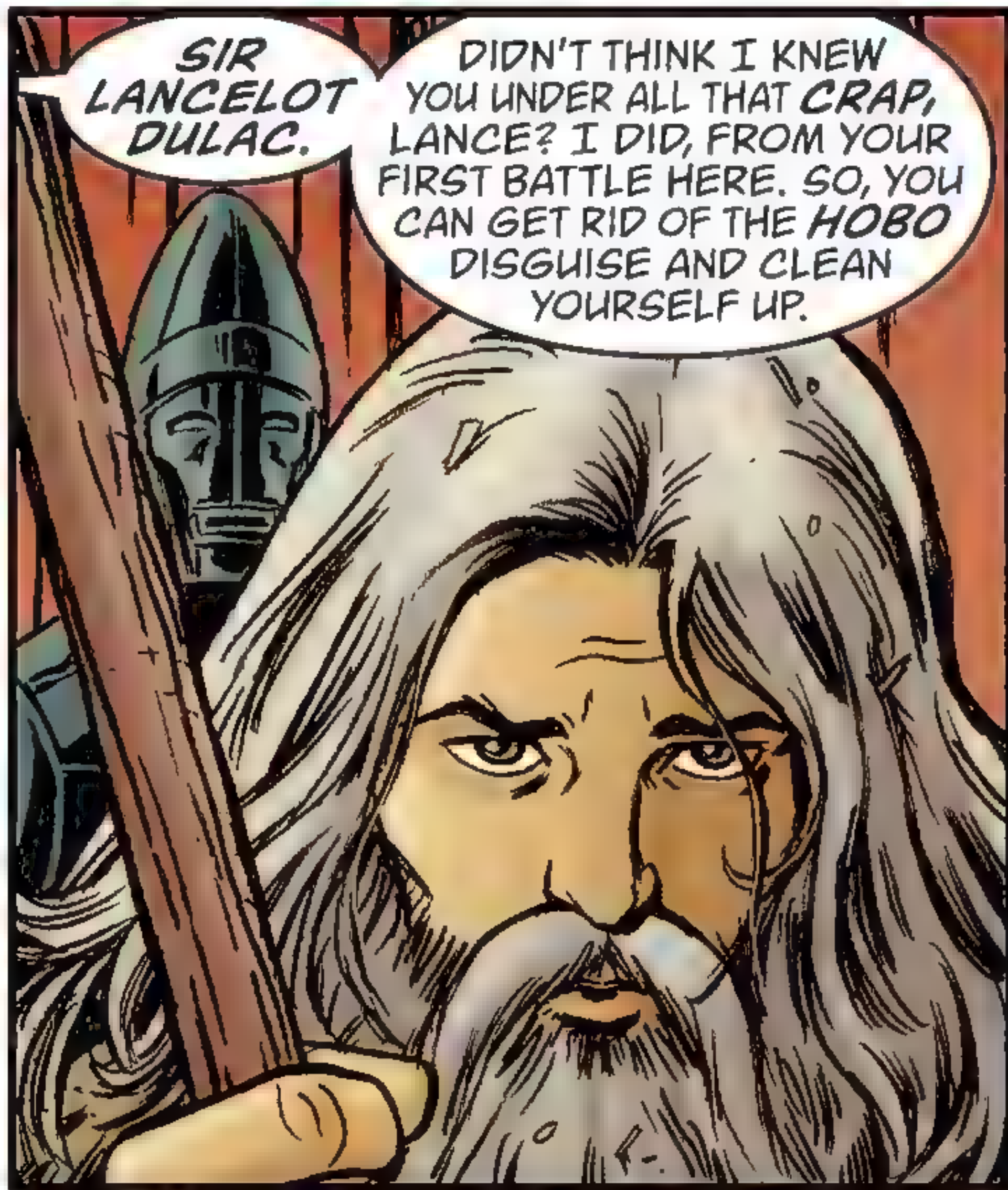
SIR BRUMP, OF CANNONDALE, EASTERMUSE AND OTHER FAR PLACES.

ARE YE SURE 'TIS ME WHAWS RIGHTLY CHOOSEN, MISSY ROSE?



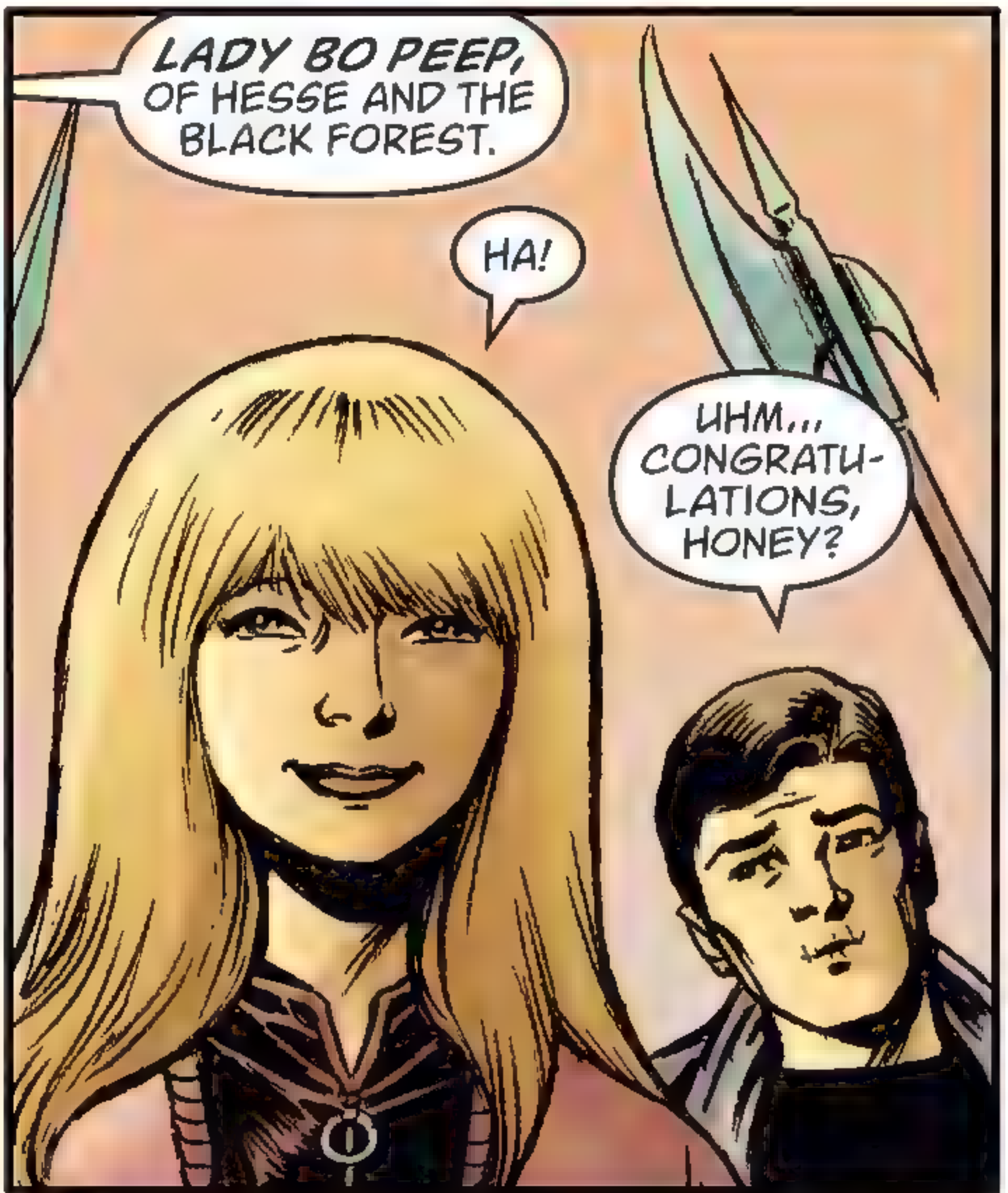
SIR WELLSTUFFED, OF TOYLAND AND OF THE DISCARDIA.

OH--UH-- REALLY? THEN... UH... I'LL TRY TO REPRESENT THERESE AND TOYLAND WELL, AND NOT LET YOU DOWN.



SIR LANCELOT DULAC.

DIDN'T THINK I KNEW YOU UNDER ALL THAT CRAP, LANCE? I DID, FROM YOUR FIRST BATTLE HERE. SO, YOU CAN GET RID OF THE HOBO DISGUISE AND CLEAN YOURSELF UP.



LADY BO PEEP, OF HESSE AND THE BLACK FOREST.

HA!

UHM... CONGRATULATIONS, HONEY?



SIR REYNARD, THE FOX KNIGHT.

THIS WILL TURN INTERESTING, QUICK.



AND LADY MAEVE, OF DUNHOLLOW.

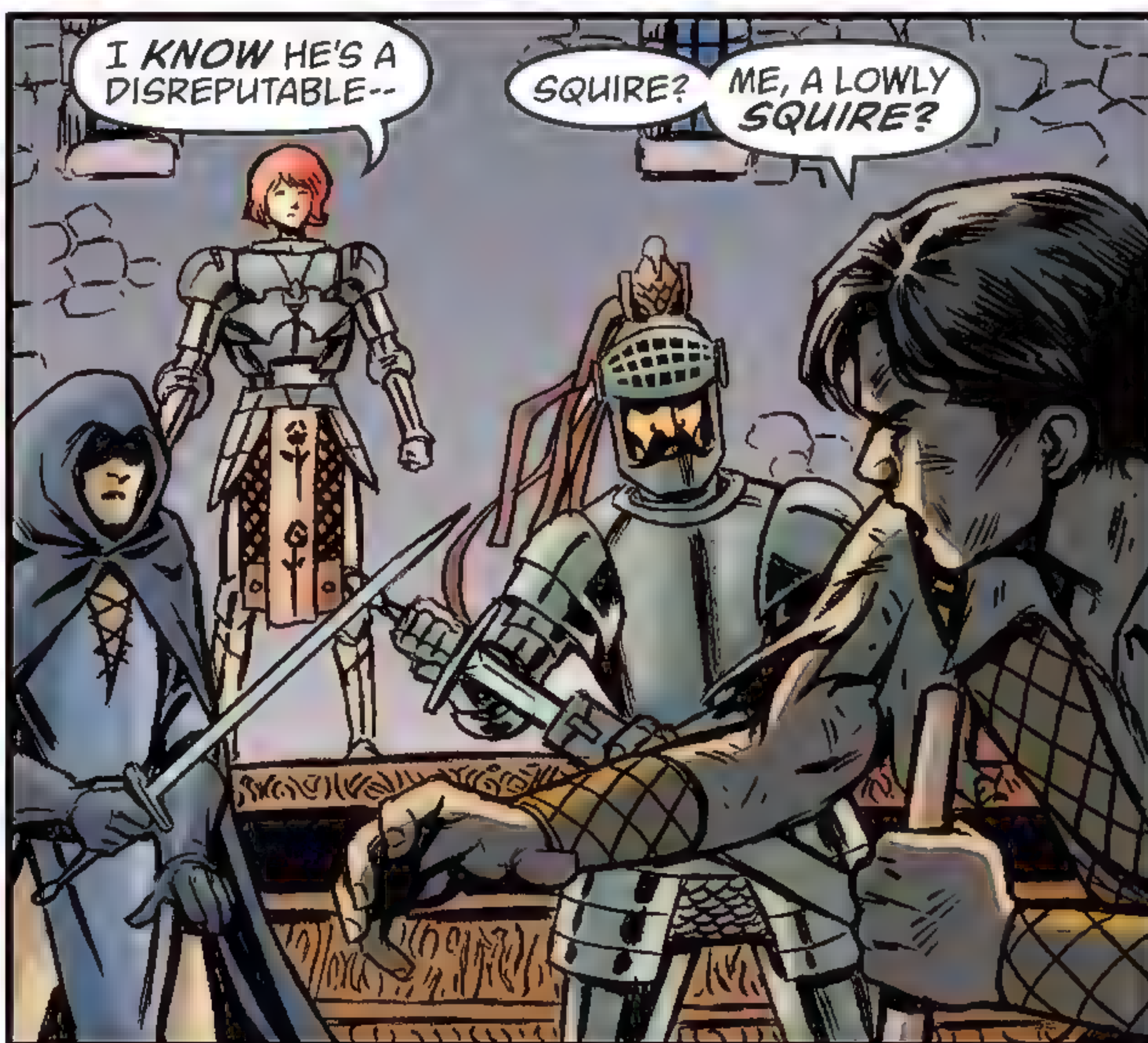
I'M HONORED TO SERVE YOU AND THIS MOST PUISSANT KNIGHTLY ORDER.





YOU ARE THE FIRST SIX. WE'LL DISCUSS LATER WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR YOU TO TAKE INTO SERVICE AS *SQUIRES*, BUT FIRST, I'D ASK A FAVOR OF YOU.

WILL ANYONE ACCEPT *PRINCE BRANDISH* AS YOUR *SQUIRE*?



I KNOW HE'S A DISREPUTABLE--

SQUIRE? ME, A LOWLY *SQUIRE*?



YES, A LOWLY *SQUIRE*, OR A *PRINCE* OF THE DEEP DITCH. TAKE YOUR *PICK*.

SO THEN, AS I WAS SAYING...



I KNOW HE'S A DISREPUTABLE *SACK* OF WHATEVER'S WORSE THAN DUNG, BUT HE'S SOMETHING OF A PERSONAL *PROJECT* OF MINE.

A *REDEMPTION* THING, IF YOU'RE WILLING TO HELP ME OUT. YOU'D BE ALLOWED TO BEAT HIM.



THINK IT OVER, OKAY? THAT'S IT FOR NOW. *WEYLAND* WILL HELP YOU LOCATE YOUR QUARTERS IN THE CASTLE. DINNER IS HERE, AT EIGHT.

OH, AND *LANCE*? I'M SERIOUS.

BATHE, SHAVE AND THEN BATHE AGAIN.

TAKE IT AS YOUR *FIRST* ORDER IN THE *NEW* ORDER. I CAN SMELL YOU FROM HERE.

I MOSTLY STAYED AWAY FROM FABLE-TOWN BECAUSE MY WINDS ARE CHILLY AND DISHEARTENING.

I'M **SERIOUS**. I JUST SAW IT OUT IN THE COURT-YARD.



SINCE THEY WERE FRIENDS OF MOMMY AND DADDY, I THOUGHT IT BEST TO LEAVE THEM ALONE.

THE MISSING PIECE IN BIGBY'S SIDE GOT FILLED IN, ALL BY ITSELF, BUT THERE'S AN EVEN **ODDER** THING ABOUT IT.



THERE'S A SMALL RING-SHAPED **CUT** IN THAT PIECE, LIKE A SCAR, OR A DECORATION.

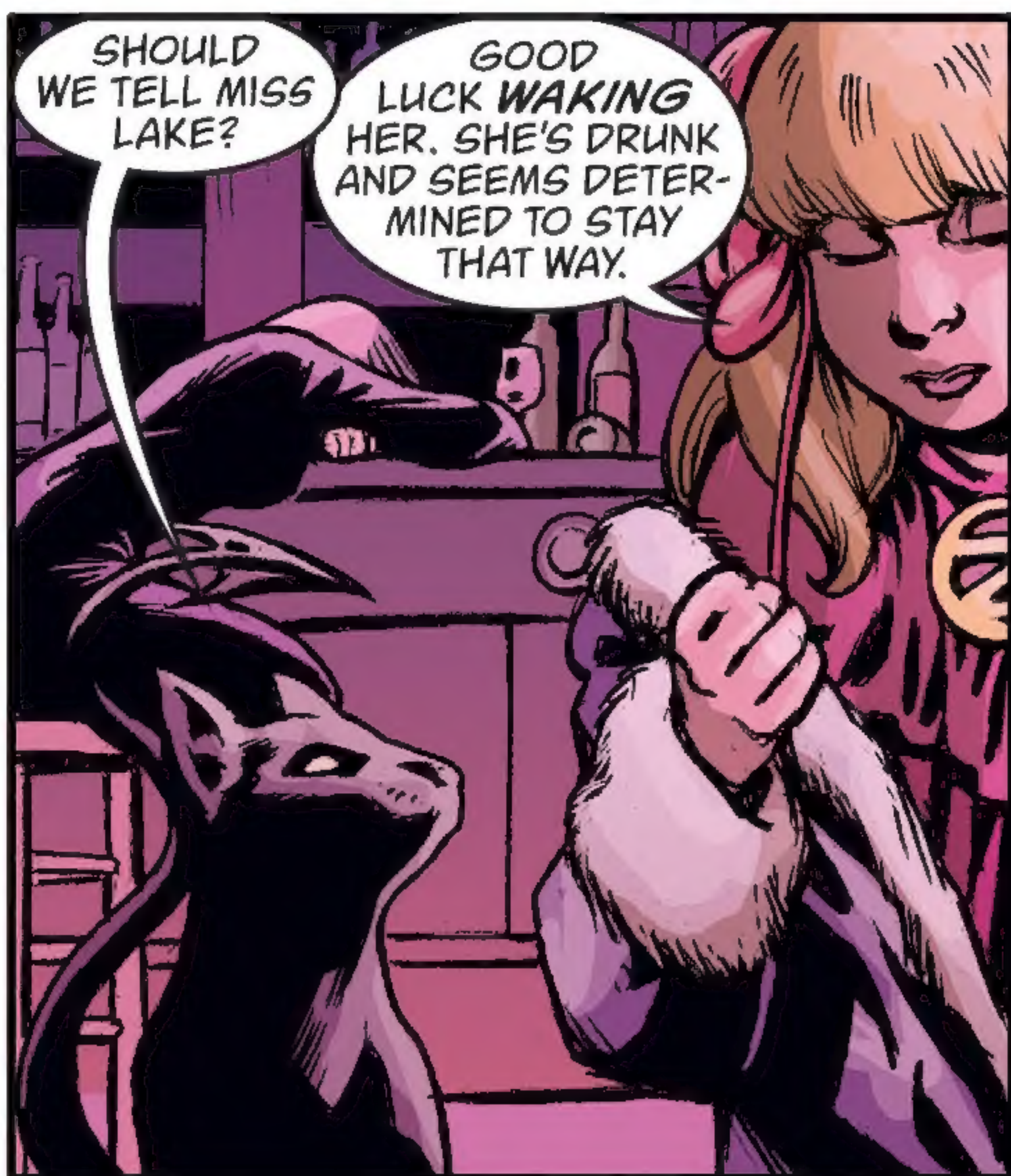
SO, LIKE A RING THEN?

COME AND SEE FOR YOURSELF.



SHOULD WE TELL MISS LAKE?

GOOD LUCK **WAKING** HER. SHE'S DRUNK AND SEEMS DETERMINED TO STAY THAT WAY.



LOOK AT THIS!

LOOK AT **WHAT**, OZMA?



IF ONLY I'D *BEEN* THERE,  
AND LOOKED IN ON MY  
DADDY MORE OFTEN.

OR IF ONLY I'D THOUGHT TO SET SOME  
OF MY OWN MINIONS AROUND HIM,  
GUARDING HIM. AND NOT CARED HOW  
THEY MIGHT CHILL THE RESIDENT FABLES.

MAYBE THEN I COULD HAVE  
DONE SOMETHING THE DAY  
MY DADDY DISAPPEARED  
ENTIRELY.

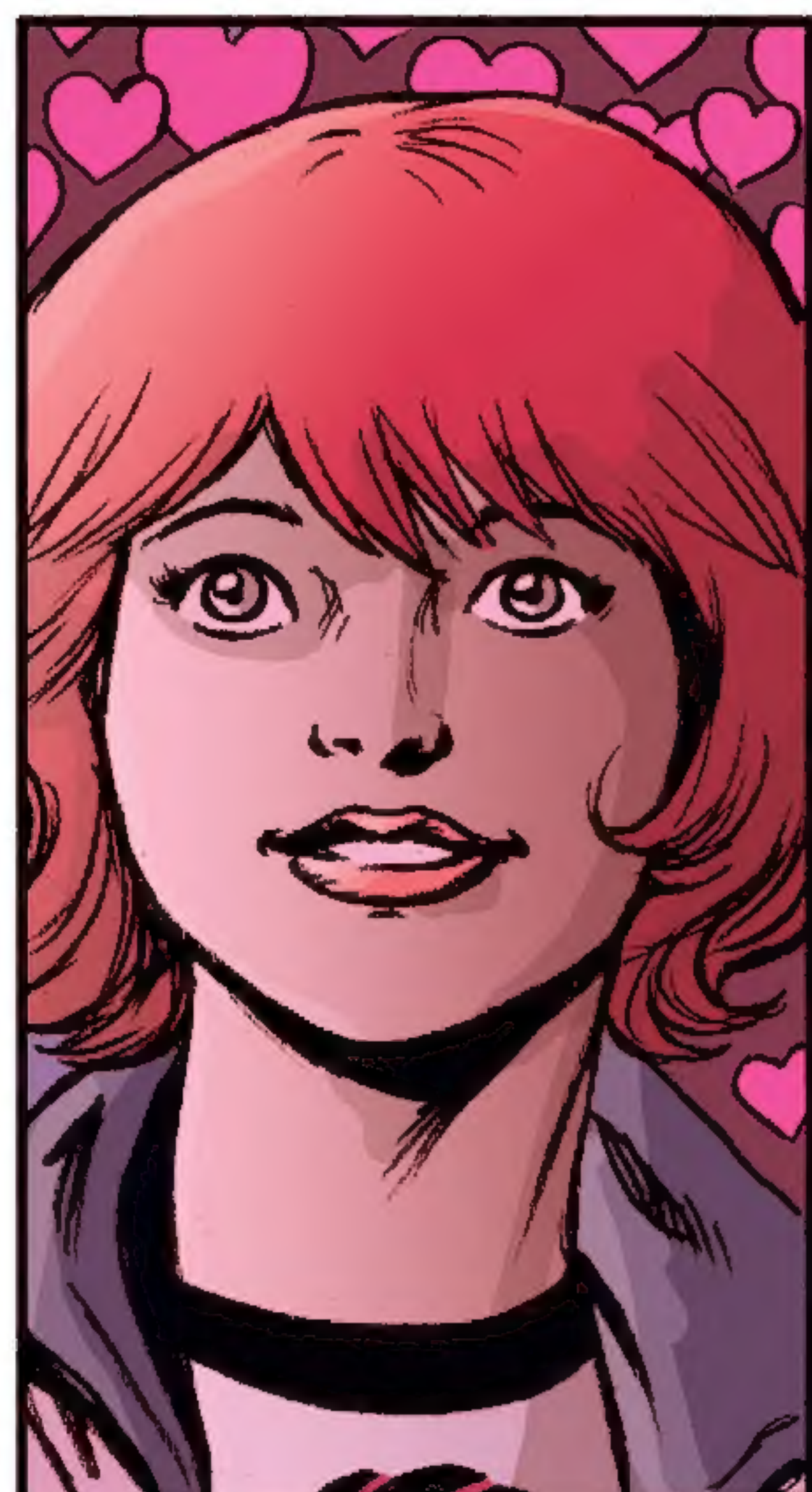
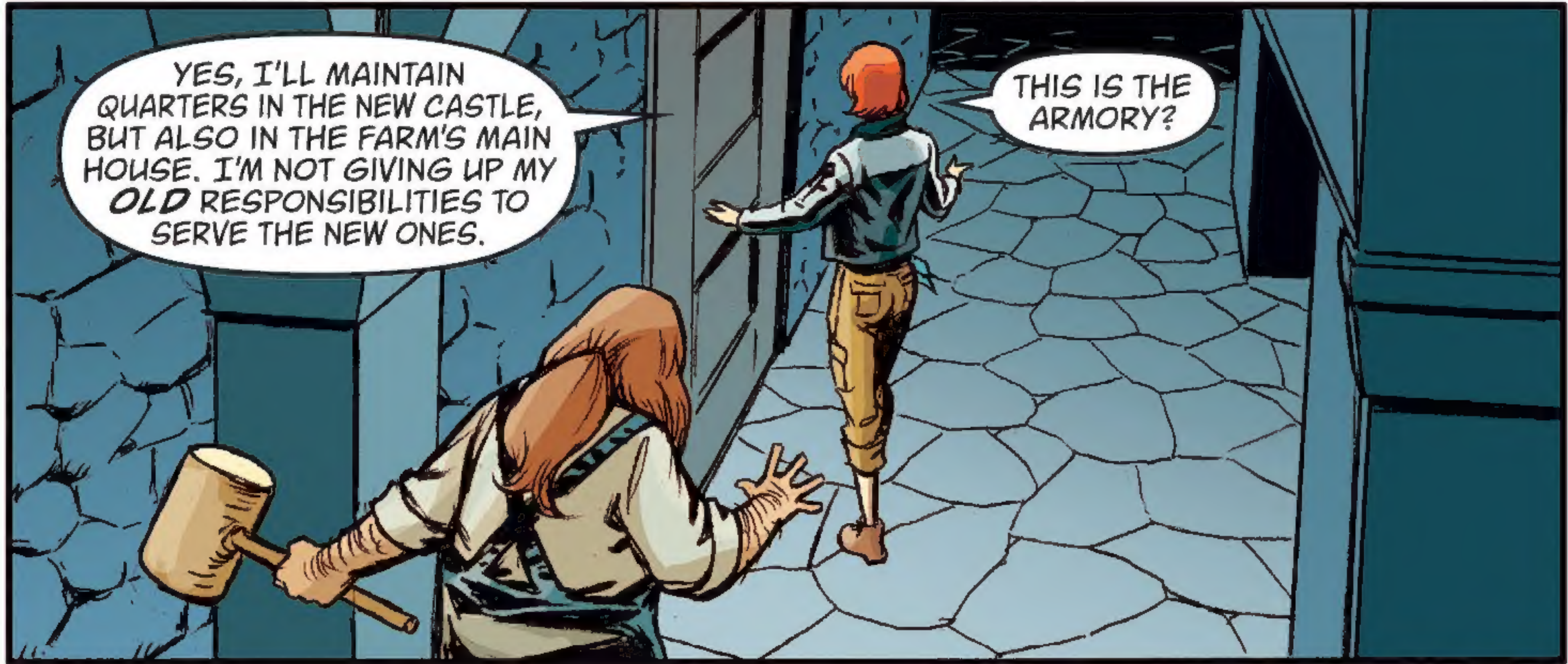
MAYBE THEN I COULD  
HAVE STOPPED THE  
*HELL* THAT FOLLOWED.

HE'S  
GONE!

HOW?  
THE SPELLS  
SURROUNDING  
THAT CAGE  
WERE--

EVERY  
TRACE OF GLASS,  
DOWN TO THE SMALLEST  
PARTICLE. I SENSE NOT  
AN *ATOM* OF BIGBY  
LEFT.

# EPILOGUE: The Shave and a Haircut Complication



NEXT: ROOT AND BRANCH



NATHAN